



Once more on the Politics of Language

This course was not to teach language. It was to examine and to problematise the politics of language in South Africa.

We have seen that whereas the Constitution enshrines 11 official languages and instructs governments to take care of them and any others that may be used by South Africans; and whereas institutions have been created for that purpose; yet the 11 languages are not getting equal attention. The weaker ones are getting less attention and the stronger ones are getting more resources.

The net result is that the indigenous South African languages are not being preserved. Instead, the former colonial languages are being preserved.

When we look at the whole continent of Africa, we see that the same tendency for the strengthening of the former colonial or exogenous languages (French, Portuguese, Arabic and English) and the relative decline of African languages,

with the exception of Kiswahili, is continuing.

For the purpose of constructing a Pan-African political culture, we are obliged to use these few languages, but South Africans are not learning them - as a rule - with the exception of English.

South Africans will be obliged to develop the learning of French, Portuguese and Arabic, in the first place, and then move to the learning other African countries' indigenous languages, starting with Kiswahili, if our country is going to play its full part in the anti-Imperialist unity-in-action of the Continent of Africa, as envisaged by the late Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah.

Consequences

Consequences of the neglect of languages, internally and externally will be that politics are limited. The ideas of politics will be expressed in few languages, most likely the exogenous ones, and hence any migration to politics will have to mean migration away from indigenous language.

Such a migration will set up a contradiction between the politics of liberation on the one hand, and our South African characteristics on the other. Whereas we already know that liberation must embrace South African characteristics if it is to be a real liberation.

Please see the attached document.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Writer in a Neo-colonial State, 1993, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, extract.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)